

Gandy Dancer Archives

Volume 5 | Issue 1

Article 7

12-1-2016

Stars-and-stripes Sicilian

Gabi Basile
SUNY Geneseo

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Recommended Citation

Basile, Gabi (2016) "Stars-and-stripes Sicilian," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://knight scholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol5/iss1/7>

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GABI BASILE

Stars-and-stripes Sicilian

I.

Sicily, september proclaimed
quaint rowboats arranged on a church-glass ocean
and cobblestone alley corners bursting with flora,
october boasting prints of glossy brushstrokes,
overlapping colors unconstrained by any currency
but exchanging finger-rubbed coppers for tomatoes:
here is your *casa*.

godfather boy in classroom
lips pursed out and bobbing head,
the shine of a gun's side
is Sicily, cigar ash on puffy wedding sleeves
or long fingernails clutching vinegar-soaked
cucumbers, cold pizza and television hot tub sex,
here is your *eredità*.

northern italian friends describe liquid trash
running underground Sicily, and people much the same
ethnographies describe black lace covering bristly christian hair
nonna's apron folding with her fleshy stomach
and glad gambling under yellow light,
women and children barred, dogs
here is your *verità*.

II.

stubby fingers with round knuckles
dragging comb through bottle-dark hair
and *pastina* in store-brand chicken stock,
my father stews *braciole* and burns it
like his mother did when pop took out the belt
under the cross, he was wine-drunk
while their stained sink bubbled eggplant
and cockroaches scuttled the plaster.

i wasn't far out of the wooden highchair
when my father demanded i drink red wine
from a thin dixie cup,
i crumpled it and handed him the pink-stained paper
and told him i was *Siciliano*.